

A gathering of Rangers



Photos by Jason Kaye

Rangers from Company B, 2nd Bn., 75th Ranger Rgt. scramble to their next firing point during a best squad competition held in conjunction with a day-long observance of the unit's 30th anniversary at Fort Lewis.



Rangers

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"You're breathing hard, you're tired, you're sweating — it makes it more difficult to shoot," said Sgt. Mick Moran, a former Ranger who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and now works in 1st Corps.

His brother, Spc. Kevin Moran, helped his Company B squad win the competition.



From left: Mark Vance, Jerry Bethke and Kevin Leppla recite the Ranger Creed during the 30th anniversary of the reactivation of the 2nd Bn., 75th Ranger Regt.

Other family members don't often get to smell a weapon's gunpowder or feel its recoil, but 2nd Bat., 75th Ranger Regt. commander Lt. Col. David Haight wanted to give them a chance to personally understand what their Soldiers experience on a daily basis.

"They hear about this stuff, but they can't experience it," said Haight. "They support us all the time, but they usually don't get to see what we do."

So wives and children lined up to see and shoot automatic weapons and pistols while listening to the ping of bullets striking metal targets.

For 12-year-old Hayden Lopez, seeing what weapon his dad used in combat to protect his life meant reassurance and understanding — he looked forward to seeing the M4 in action.

"At least they know we have the best equipment we can possibly get," said Sgt. 1st Class Danny Lopez, who recently returned from Afghanistan.

Nearly 150 family members, friends and former Rangers who attended the ceremony could see the technological advancements made over the years through displays of communication equipment and sniper weapons systems set up around the parade field.

Some of that technology aided Rangers during continued missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Beyond the equipment used to protect each other and accomplish the mission, Rangers used "intestinal fortitude" and other values embodied in the Ranger Creed to distinguish themselves in combat.

About 40 Soldiers stood in formation before their commanders and received medals, such as the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medal.

"I felt pretty proud to stand there with them all because we sucked through everything together," said Pfc. Timothy McLaughlin, who received the Bronze Star with "V" Device. "A lot of us are friends — it's pretty rewarding."



Sgt. Maj. Randall Inman, left, looks on as Lt. Col. David Haight pins the Bronze Star for Valor on 1st Lt. Raphael Vasquez and Pfc. Timothy McLaughlin, both of Company B.

Above left: Rangers from Company C, 2nd. Bn., 75th Ranger Regt. engage targets during the best squad competition.

Above right: Rangers from Company B, 2nd. Bn., 75th Ranger Regt. climb a rope obstacle in the battalion's compound during a best squad competition.

Although one Ranger could not stand with them for recognition — fellow Rangers and family members will never forget him. Pfc. Nathan Stahl died Sept. 21 during a combat patrol in Iraq — killed by an improvised explosive device.

"You never stop grieving for your Soldiers," said Haight. "They'll never forget Stahl."

Exchanging memories of him and other Rangers, men from 2nd Bn., 75th Ranger Regt. sat down after the ceremony to eat

food and drink beer with their buddies.

"To me, this feels very much like a high-school reunion — it feels great," said Tom Hili, a former staff sergeant.

"You feel like you're home again," said Van Arsdale.

